



Captain Edward Penniman built this ornate home in 1868. As a whaler, he and his family were away from this home for years at a time. Between voyages this is where the entire family would reunite. The bogs, fields, and marsh served as the family's playground, where they hunted waterfowl and sailed on their small sailboat "Elsie."



The National Park Service purchased the Penniman House in 1963 from the youngest granddaughter, Irma Penniman Kahn. This Historic American Buildings Survey photo taken in 1962 shows some of the furnishings that were in the formal parlor at that time.



Edward Penniman
1831-1913



Betsey Augusta (Knowles) Penniman
1838-1931



Eugene Blanchard Penniman
1860-1921



Betsey Augusta Penniman
1868-1957



Edward Damon Penniman
1870-1945

Both Edward Penniman and his wife, Betsey Knowles were born, raised, and died here at Fort Hill. Each of their three children accompanied their parents on at least one whaling voyage. Separation from family was a way of life for the Pennimans. Five months after they married, Captain Penniman left his wife to take his first command of a whaling voyage that would last nearly four years.



After more than 22 years at sea, Captain Penniman retired to this comfortable home in 1884 with his wife, and daughter Bessie. Some of the souvenirs and keepsakes seen in these photographs tell the story of the exotic travels taken by the captain and his family.



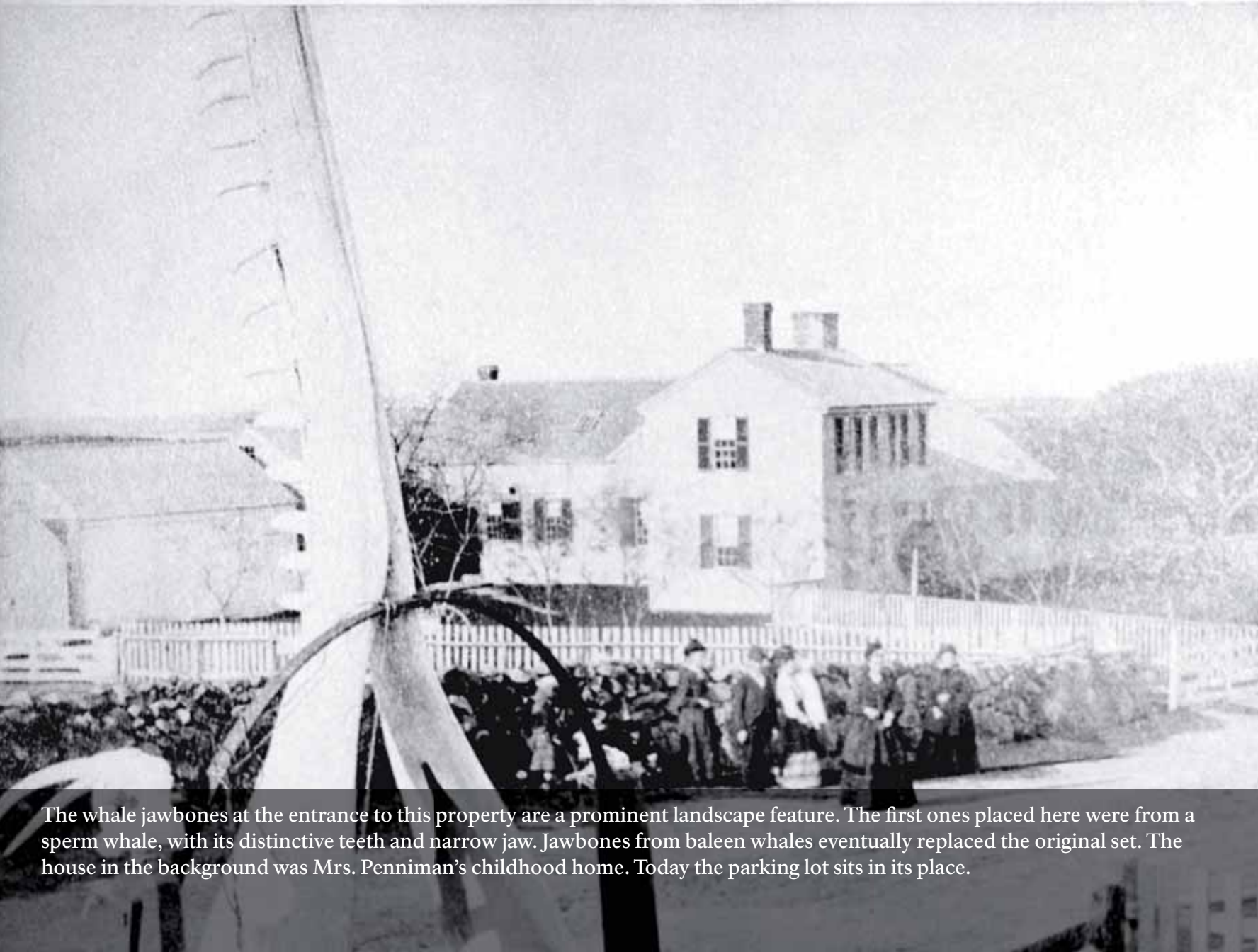
The Penniman Family tended to a small “gentleman” farm while not at sea. At times the barnyard menagerie included a cow named Daisy, Princess the horse, Rhode Island red chickens, and a pig. Captain Penniman and a young helper harvest hay to feed the livestock.



Hunting for fowl was a popular sport which also put fresh meat on the table. There were also many chores to be tackled.



This 1897 calendar open to November, along with the roasted turkey and table settings, imply that the Pennimans are about to enjoy a Thanksgiving dinner in their dining room.



The whale jawbones at the entrance to this property are a prominent landscape feature. The first ones placed here were from a sperm whale, with its distinctive teeth and narrow jaw. Jawbones from baleen whales eventually replaced the original set. The house in the background was Mrs. Penniman's childhood home. Today the parking lot sits in its place.



This scene remains much the same today as at the end of the 19th century, except that the home on the left no longer exists and the roads are paved. The pastureland out of view beyond the houses is maintained by the National Park Service as open fields to preserve the historic rural landscape of Fort Hill.



Although this Historic American Buildings Survey photo represents the master bedroom in 1962, it is likely that Captain and Mrs. Penniman followed the same layout for their bedroom when they lived in the house.



For the Dollar Scrabble

March 31, 1898

*I worked hard for my dollar
As I think you'll all agree,
When you hear my little story,
And quite sympathize with me.*

*For when the Captain mentioned,
As he did one bright March day,
That the Yacht "Elsie" needed keeling,
And he'd have a man to pay.*

*I said to earn my dollar,
I would help my charming spouse,
But he as quick retorted
That my place, was in the house.*

*For he said he had no notion,
Of pleasing a congregation
Of neighbors who would flock to see
A petticoat conflagration.*

*Now don't you go and tell it,
For it is a secret-grave,
I wouldn't have the folks know it
My precious life to save.*

*But I donned a tam "shanter"
And bloomers neat and natty
While my daughter was convulsed with glee,
And my husband called me fatty.*

*But I helped to keel the Elsie,
And received my recompense,
And then I worked at picking stones,
And earned a few more cents.*

Augusta Knowles Penniman



This humorous poem written by Mrs. Penniman describes her involvement in melting lead and pouring it into a mold for the keel of their pleasure sailboat, "Elsie."



Captain and Mrs. Penniman and their guests enjoy a game of cards on their front terrace. When the house was built fill was brought in to construct the terracing around the basement. This raised the elevation of land providing a higher foundation from which to build the house.



Betsey Augusta (Bessie) Penniman was eight years old in 1876 when her family set sail on a whaling voyage that lasted over three years. She remained behind with an aunt in Cambridge. Seven years later, at the age of 15, Bessie embarked on her first whaling adventure.



The two people on bikes in front of the Penniman House are believed to be Eugene (Genia) and Edward (Neddie) Penniman. The photo was taken around 1888. The House with its cupola and matching barn was a prominent landmark from land and sea. Its “modern” features such as indoor plumbing and central heat were rare on Cape Cod at the time. Some of the cottonwood trees in the background still survive. They were carried as seeds from Chicago in Captain Penniman’s vest pocket.



Elroy Penniman, son of Eugene and Carrie (Harding), frolics with a Guernsey calf in the barnyard behind the Penniman home. Long since removed, Mrs. Penniman's childhood home is in the background on the left.